

United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough
Chairman

Roy Holladay
President

Home Office Update September 23, 2004

Dear Brethren,

The home office staff (like all of you I am sure) are excited about observing the Feast of Tabernacles, beginning a week from today. Employees will be traveling to various Feast sites within and outside of the United States, and they are looking forward very much to fellowshiping with brethren from around the world. A few have already left for the Feast, but most will be traveling next week. My wife and I will be in Panama City Beach this year, and are glad to have the opportunity to meet with brethren there.

In this regard, please remember that the home office will close on Friday, September 24, at 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. While some employees may be in the office early next week, the office in general will be vacated. The office reopens on Monday, October 11, at 8 a.m.

As we prepare for and observe the upcoming Holy Days, let us keep in mind God's instruction to remember the less fortunate during our enjoyment of this wonderful time (Deuteronomy 16:14). First, let us remember to pray for God's special blessings upon those who are suffering because of recent trials of weather, illness, loss of a loved one or other difficulty. Let us ask God to provide them with the strength that comes from the "joy of the LORD" (Nehemiah 8:10). Let us then do our part (James 2:15-16) for them and others, to make sure all members of the Body of Christ have a full Feast.

The Holy Days (weekly and annual) are also excellent opportunities to continue the work that God has called us to do—mainly through our example (Matthew 5:13-16) and our love for one another (John 13:34-35). While God has called us out of living as this world does, He has not removed us to an isolated corner of the globe (John 17:11, 15-16). It is interesting to note that God originally wanted Israel to be a model nation to the other countries around it, for the purpose of having those people recognize the righteousness and glory of God (Deuteronomy 4:1-9). In our interaction with those around us—especially when we are gathered in large numbers where God has placed His name—we have a powerful opportunity to "preach the gospel" through our words, attitudes and deeds.

This update will hopefully give everyone the latest information on some interesting developments—including ABC, radio, our Web site and *Vertical Thought* magazine. While we can always talk about and analyze numerical data with regards to our work, it is perhaps most important to "hear the fruit" of our labors from those writing to us. To this end, Cecil Maranville again updates us on the types of questions we are receiving. In addition, Mike Bennett has included a small sampling of the many comments we receive about how lives have been changed through God's truth. I hope this will encourage us all, as we look forward to the time when literally the whole world will be changed by God's intervention.

Norma and I, together with the entire home office staff, wish all of our brethren a most joyful, inspiring and rejuvenating Feast of Tabernacles!

Roy Holladay

Announcement: ABC Mini-Sampler in Sacramento, California

An ABC Mini-Sampler will be presented in Sacramento, California, the weekend of November 13 and 14. Presenters will be Church president Roy Holladay and ABC instructor Ralph Levy. Topics and venue will be confirmed later. Those interested should contact Clyde Kilough, pastor of the Sacramento

congregation, for details about housing. You may contact Mr. Kilough at clyde_kilough@ucg.org or (916) 725-7957. We invite you to join us for a stimulating weekend of education and fellowship in central California!

Ralph Levy

Ambassador Bible Center

Currently we are doing administrative work to prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles. Gary Antion will be doing three ABC seminars in Germany for the brethren in addition to speaking on both Holy Days. Ralph Levy is going to Portugal and England for the Feast and has speaking assignments at both. We have now accepted 28 students for next year. We have several more awaiting the Admissions Committee and a few more who said they were planning to attend this year, but have not yet sent their applications to ABC.

Upon our return from the Feast, there is the Mini-Sampler in Toronto, Ontario, over October 23 and 24 and the Mini-Sampler in Salisbury, North Carolina, over November 13 and 14. Also November 13 and 14 is a Mini-Sampler in the Sacramento area (see above). So, by the time ABC resumes in January, we will have covered the United States from coast to coast, in addition to Canada and Germany.

We would recommend that any students who are planning to attend in 2005 submit their applications as soon as possible. The deadline for applications is December 20.

We at ABC wish you all a wonderful Feast and hope that many will attend the special ABC meetings at various Feast sites. A representative will present information about ABC and be able to answer questions you might have regarding the biblical studies program.

Gary Antion

Compass Check on the Web Site

The weekly Monday morning home office Compass Check meetings provide a forum for announcements for the week and include an encouraging message on keeping our “spiritual compass” focused on God’s way of life. The idea was proposed to make these meetings available on our ucg.org Web site so our visitors could be encouraged by the message for the week.

On May 10, the first Compass Check meeting was posted in video format for both broadband and dial-up Internet connection users. The first Compass Check contributed over 580 views to the total 1,200 video views for the month of May. Over the next few months video views increased to 1,800 for June to 2,200 for July. In August, the videos generated over 1,315 views. So far, our most popular Compass Check was given by Roy Holladay on July 19, in which he talked about the ABC Fund-Raiser/Talent Show and discussed the topic of reflecting God in our lives.

The majority of the video views, 75 percent, come from visitors who are requesting to view the “ondemand” streaming video at broadband Internet connection speeds! It is interesting to see the trend toward higher-speed Internet access, as experts had predicted.

Each Compass Check video is posted on the Web site for four weeks, rotating out with each new weekly video. Only the four most current videos are available at a time for visitors to access. Showcasing the weekly Compass Check meetings in “ondemand” streaming video format is proving to be another positive tool in keeping our Web site visitors connected to what is happening at the home office. View the Compass Check page at www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice/compasscheck.htm.

Aaron Booth/Clay Thornton

Feast of Tabernacles: Panama City Beach Ready for Feastgoers

God spared the Feast site in Panama City Beach, Florida, from Hurricane Ivan! The Edgewater Beach Resort in Panama City Beach is ready to receive us for the Feast of Tabernacles and so are the other properties listed in the *Festival Planning Brochure*. Most of the restaurants are operating and the beaches and the water should be fine.

Brethren traveling from points west should be aware that several sections of the bridge on I-10 crossing the east bay in Pensacola are missing and they should plan to take an alternate route further north. Please don't try to use Highway 98 from Pensacola to Destin because sections of it are still closed. Those traveling from the north or east to Panama City Beach should not experience any problems.

We do appreciate the prayers of everyone for our safety in this area and God surely answered those prayers. We are looking forward to seeing many of you in Panama City Beach for the Feast.

Please continue to pray for God's protection and good weather for all the Feast sites.

Harold Rhodes

Feast of Tabernacles Webcasts

The following Feast sites are scheduled to offer live Webcasts of services:

- Kelowna, British Columbia.
- Bend, Oregon.
- Hagerstown, Maryland.
- Winchester, England.
- Guanajuato, Mexico.

You will be able to access the Webcasts from www.ucg.org/feast where a link will take you to the Webcast pages once they're active.

Aaron Booth

Good News Radio Program

On September 20 and 21, Gary Petty recorded six new radio programs for use during our next 13-week contract period, which begins November 6. Jerold Aust, longtime minister and *Good News* senior writer, was in Cincinnati to record four of the programs with Mr. Petty, and longtime minister and Ambassador Bible Center coordinator, Gary Antion, recorded two programs with Mr. Petty. In addition, material for six more radio programs is being edited from special sermons given by Mr. Petty in San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Petty has now delivered more than 100 radio programs. Here is a listing of what was covered:

1. The Untouchables—with Gary Antion.
2. Is Baptism Important?—with Gary Antion.
3. The Spirit Realm, Part 1.
4. The Spirit Realm, Part 2.
5. Will the Jews Survive?—with Jerold Aust.
6. What Lies Beyond the Grave?—with Jerold Aust.
7. Have Christians Forgotten Christ?—with Jerold Aust.
8. Prayer Can Improve Your Life—with Jerold Aust.
9. Searching for Happiness, Part 1.
10. Searching for Happiness, Part 2.
11. Does God's Grace Have Conditions, Part 1.
12. Does God's Grace Have Conditions, Part 2.

Thank you to all those who participated, and may this next round of airings prove to be fruitful in preaching the truth of God and the good news of His soon coming Kingdom!

Peter Eddington

Vertical Thought Begins Second Year

The October-December 2004 issue of *Vertical Thought* magazine marks the beginning of this publication's second year as an "in print" periodical! The first issue of *VT* came out in the fall of 2003 with a print run of 5,000. The circulation has grown steadily and the print run for the latest issue was 11,500. According to Connie Seelig, mail manager, we are adding approximately 1,900 subscribers with every issue. This growth has been a pleasant surprise since there has been very little advertising. New subscribers most often find us and request subscriptions via our Web site at www.verticalthought.org.

A significant number of new subscribers are young people and youth workers without previous connections to the Church. Several messages have come in requesting permission to reprint specific articles for distribution to youth in other churches. Approval is usually given for these reprints provided the article is printed in its entirety and a statement included saying that this article was produced by the United Church of God, *an International Association*.

A team of ministers answers about 70 e-mail questions a month from those who leave a message on our Web site or write in. Questions asked most often deal with relationships, sex, dating and education. Many of these questions and answers are used in *VT* after personal information is removed. After being published, these questions and answers are then added to the Web site and included in a topical index.

David Treybig

Holy Day Offering: Preliminary Reported Figures From the Feast of Trumpets 2004

Attendance: 11,591 *

Offering: \$631,050.21 **

* There were 12 congregations that could not meet because of Hurricane Ivan. This number would be significantly higher otherwise.

** The actual should be at least \$700,000 when all the Feast of Trumpets offerings are mailed in by individuals.

Compared With Feast of Trumpets 2003 (Reported Figures)

Attendance: 12,718

Offering Reported: \$644,695.68

This represents an 8.9 percent decrease in attendance from the reported attendance for the Feast of Trumpets 2003, and a 2.2 percent decrease in the offering from the reported offering for Trumpets 2003.

Personal Correspondence

We fell a little behind our pace in August with a total of 84 letters. Another 90 were answered by the e-mail PC team. Here are some highlights.

Three asked about baptism. Is the baptism in Jesus' name a different baptism than the one in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Is it necessary to be baptized, when one has already repented and accepted Christ?

A reader asked if he could find the 1611 version of the Bible. Amazon.com sells it for about \$35; any store can order it by the ISBN 0840700415.

It was a heavy month for issues dealing with trying to convert others. An inmate asked if he should straighten his chaplain out about the Sabbath. Someone wants bulk *GNs* to give out at the office; another wants *Bible Study Course* lessons to give away. A reader asks for pointers on how to go door-to-door with the truth of God. A couple of prison preachers wrote this month, one asking for literature in as many languages as possible so he could win souls. Another asked for advice on how to deal with “a congregant” who is straying from Sabbath keeping; apparently, he has in mind some type of disfellowship.

One of our Caribbean readers asked if she could still get the literature while in Cuba several months of the year at medical school. (No, she can't; the government of Cuba won't allow religious literature into the country.)

A coworker asked tentatively about the Feast of Tabernacles. He attended 20 years ago, and he is thinking about attending again this year, but he is uncertain about it. We encouraged him to come, assuring him that he would be made to feel welcome.

Several questioned our beliefs and practices. Do we celebrate birthdays? Do we have missionaries? Are we part of “Armstrong's group”? What is the difference between another Church of God group and us? What is our view of the Bush administration's policy of preemptive war?

And we had a number of subscribers ask for personal counsel. In this upside-down world, we encounter some unusual situations. A young man asked if God approves of him staying in a homosexual relationship, so long as he remains with one partner. On the same topic, a woman asked how to cope with homosexuality in the world around and in her family. A lady just learning about the Sabbath wants to know if God would understand if she had to work 8-12 hours on the Sabbath. A Nigerian youth who is just learning the truth wants us to place him in a Christian home; his Muslim parents are ordering him to stop reading our material.

Cecil Maranville

Reader Comments

I just wanted you to know that after my husband of 25 years died, I backslid and went the wrong way, pushing everything good in my life away from me. But since I have been receiving your *Good News* magazines and your *World News and Prophecy* magazines, the wonderful articles have put a fire back in my heart for the Lord Jesus Christ. Right now I am reading the little book I received from you, *The Church Jesus Built*. I'm on page 50, “A falling away from the truth begins.” My next to read is going to be *The Ten Commandments*. So I just want to say thank you very much from the bottom of my heart. Because without your magazines or your books, I would still be lost in this great big world with Satan the winner. But now Satan is the loser and I'm the winner, cause the child of God is back where she belongs.

The Church Jesus Built is a very powerful book. I would recommend this to everyone to read. I am also taking your *Bible Study Course*. I am on Lesson 7, “The Calling of God.” I'm 56 years old and I've read the Bible most of my life and study it. But after your *Bible Study Course* I discovered there was a lot I still did not know. You are never too old to learn.

C.P., Bokoshe, Oklahoma

Thank you so much for *The Good News* magazine, *World News and Prophecy*, the *Bible Study Course*, all your other free literature and for personally answering my letter. Finally I'm understanding the Bible and I feel that I can, and am, getting to know Jesus Christ on a personal level. My life is changing (for the better). I have a long way to go, but I have purpose in my life. I know my son is resting in peace and I will

see him again. Now I smile when I talk about him. I have been lifted out of the depression that I've been in.

Our glorious Almighty God certainly does answer our prayers. After the burial of my son I searched for truth and prayed over and over again for the truth to be revealed to me—but what I was reading in the Bible was not what I was taught. I came across your literature by accident (I should say I believe it was God who arranged it). At a yard sale was a box of books, and with the books was one of your free booklets. After reading it I wrote to you. Thank you so much for *The Good News* and the truth. Your literature and the Bible have become my daily reading and inspiration. I've enclosed a check. I know it isn't much, for that I do apologize. I'm not working, but I have faith that that too will change. As my financial situation improves, so will the amount I send. But for now it's a small token of my appreciation.

E.A., Great Cacapon, West Virginia

I'm 19 years old from Kentucky, and I've been reading your *Good News* magazine and books for a little while. I've really enjoyed reading them, and they're helping me understand the Bible more. I would appreciate if you would send me this book: *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*

F.M., Lily, Kentucky

I accidentally came across one of your magazines about two months ago ("The Horsemen of Revelation"). I sat down and started reading this magazine. I became very intrigued by it. Then all of a sudden, it says to wait for the next issue. I was determined to find a phone number or address to receive other magazines. Since then I have received numerous books and magazines from you. I can't wait for each issue.

Since then I started going to your church. My first day there was July 10. I have met a congregation of very nice people. I love to be around them and can't wait for each Sabbath to worship God with them. I'm hoping to join the Church soon. I want to thank you for your magazines. I have never understood Revelation until now. I have been at home the last two years reading my Bible to find the truth. Your books have helped me a lot. I am sending my tithes in to you. I plan to do so from now on.

L.D., Roanoke, Virginia

I have been wanting to write for some time, but have had my right arm in a sling! I want you to know I pray every day to the Almighty God, thanking Him for His wonderful servants on this earth that send me helps to go with the Bible (His Word). I love the sermons. I feel like I know some of the ones who give the sermons.

M.R., Eagar, Arizona

For some time now I have been receiving your *Good News* magazine. I don't know who gave you my name or how you obtained it, but I wanted to tell you how much I have appreciated receiving it and how much I have enjoyed every article. I hope you will keep the magazine coming, so I am enclosing a small gift to help with expenses.

J.M.U., Fort Myers, Florida

God bless you for helping me to transform my life. Please continue to help keep His Word alive. Jesus has truly saved me for total destruction. I have received many blessings and prayers answered. I can truly look upward and forward. Thank you for your hard work and faithful giving!

P.R., Ashtabula, Ohio

I have some of your small books, and have read them over and over. I must say I never read any other publications that I have been so impressed with as these. If you have any others, please send me some more of your books. I am enclosing a little gift.

V.W., Camden, Arkansas